

In The Claims

Please amend the claims as follows:

ClaimsWHAT IS CLAIMED IS:

1. (CURRENTLY AMENDED) A device for examining chemical and/or biological samples, comprising

a sample carrier-(10) for receiving the samples,

an objective-(14) for observing the samples through a sample carrier wall (12), wherein a gap-(20) is defined between an outer surface-(18) of the sample carrier wall-(12) and an exit lens-(16) of the objective-(14),

a film-(22) of an immersion medium to be provided in the gap-(20) such that the film is in contact with both the outer surface-(18) of the sample carrier wall-(12) and the exit lens-(16) of the objective-(14), and

a protection means-(24) surrounding the exit lens-(16) for preventing the objective-(14) from becoming fouled by the immersion medium, wherein the protection means-(24) is connected with a suction means for discharging the immersion medium,

~~characterized in that~~

wherein the protection means-(24) comprises a capillary channel-(30) connected with the suction means for discharging the immersion medium.

2. (CURRENTLY AMENDED) The device according to claim 1, ~~characterized in that~~wherein the capillary channel-(30) is essentially configured as an annular gap around the exit lens-(16).

3. (CURRENTLY AMENDED) The device according to claim 1 ~~or~~ 2,

- ~~characterized in that~~wherein the protection means ~~(24)~~ comprises at least two collar portions ~~(26,28)~~ arranged around the objective ~~(14)~~ and defining the capillary channel ~~(30)~~.
4. (CURRENTLY AMENDED) The device according to one of claims 1-3, ~~characterized in that~~wherein the protection means ~~(24)~~ comprises an overflow reservoir ~~(36)~~ for additionally receiving immersion medium.
 5. (CURRENTLY AMENDED) The device according to claim 4, ~~characterized in that the~~wherein overflow reservoir ~~(36)~~ comprises a reservoir bottom ~~(38)~~ having a reservoir bottom opening ~~(40)~~ via which the capillary channel ~~(30)~~ is connected with the overflow reservoir ~~(36)~~.
 6. (CURRENTLY AMENDED) The device according to ~~one of~~ claims 1-5, ~~characterized by~~wherein a supply means comprising a supply line ~~(42)~~, wherein an outlet opening of the supply line ~~(42)~~ is arranged that near the exit lens ~~(16)~~ of the objective ~~(14)~~ that immersion medium is supplied into the gap ~~(20)~~ at least partly with the aid of capillary forces.
 7. (CURRENTLY AMENDED) The device according to ~~one of~~ claims 1-6, ~~characterized in that~~wherein the capillary channel ~~(30)~~ is connected with a supply means for supplying immersion medium, and the capillary channel ~~(30)~~ comprises a capillary channel opening ~~(32)~~ which is arranged that near the exit lens ~~(16)~~ that immersion medium is supplied into the gap ~~(20)~~ at least partly with the aid of capillary forces.
 8. (CURRENTLY AMENDED) ~~The device according to claim 7,~~
~~characterized~~ wherein ~~in that~~ the capillary channel ~~(30)~~ is connected with a valve, in particular a 3/2-way valve, wherein the valve is connected with the suction means and with the supply means.
 9. (CURRENTLY AMENDED) A method for examining chemical and/or biological samples, wherein an exit lens ~~(16)~~ of an objective ~~(14)~~ is arranged opposite a sample carrier ~~(40)~~ for observing the sample through a sample carrier wall ~~(12)~~, wherein between an outer surface

(18) of the sample carrier wall (12) and the exit lens (16) of the objective (14) a gap (20) is defined such that in the gap (20) a film (22) of an immersion medium is arranged which is in contact with both the outer surface (18) of the sample carrier wall (12) and the exit lens (16) of the objective (14),

~~characterized in that~~

wherein via a capillary channel (30) defined in the protection means (24) surrounding the objective (14) the immersion medium is discharged automatically, at least with the aid of capillary forces.

10. (CURRENTLY AMENDED) The method according to claim 9, ~~characterized in that~~ wherein the immersion medium is supplied automatically, at least partly with the aid of capillary forces.

11. (CURRENTLY AMENDED) The method according to claim 10, ~~characterized in that~~ wherein the discharge of the immersion medium is adjusted relative to the supply such that the volume of the film (22) of immersion medium essentially remains constant.

12. (CURRENTLY AMENDED) An objective cap for protecting an objective (14) from becoming fouled by an immersion medium, comprising

an inner collar portion (26) adapted to be placed onto the objective (14),

an outer collar portion (28) arranged around the inner collar portion (26), wherein the inner collar portion (26) and the outer collar portion (28) are at least partly spaced relative to each other such that an essentially annular capillary channel (30) is defined, and

an outlet opening (34) provided in the outer collar portion (28), via which opening the capillary channel (30) is connected with a suction means.

13. (CURRENTLY AMENDED) The objective cap according to claim

12, characterized by wherein an overflow reservoir-(36) arranged in the outer collar portion-(28) for receiving the immersion medium, wherein the overflow reservoir-(36) comprises a reservoir bottom-(38) having a reservoir bottom opening-(40) via which the capillary channel-(30) is connected with the overflow reservoir-(36) for discharging immersion medium.